

CHAPTER II

THE SYSTEM OF KINSHIP AND AFFINITY¹

I. DESCENT GROUPS

AMONG the Ruanda people, Tutsi as well as Hutu, the social principle of descent was agnatic. When any informant is asked who are his ascendants, he always answers by giving the names of his father, his paternal grandfather, his paternal great grandfather up to some male ancestor beyond whom he is unable to go. He does not mention his mother nor any of her ascendants.

Questions on the actual groupings founded on this principle and their functions elicit less unanimous and clear answers. The reason is that kinship groups have undoubtedly undergone a slow process of change in several respects during the Tutsi occupation of the country. What we know of its history² is quite sufficient to convince us that there has been a progressive territorial expansion under one dynasty of rulers together with an intensification of the

¹ In order to make clear the connotations of the main concepts used in this chapter, here are a few definitions:

Ego's *kin* are his socially recognized relatives to whom he is connected through parent-child and-or sibling links. *Consanguineal* and *cognatic* relatives are used as synonyms for kin.

Ego's *affines* are his socially recognized relatives to whom he is connected through a marriage link. This link may be the first traced from Ego (the affines are then Ego's spouse's kin) or the kinship link may be the first one traced (the affines are then Ego's kin's spouse).

Ego's *patrilineal* or *agnatic* relatives are those of his kin who descend by male links from the same male ancestor as Ego.

Ego's *matrilineal* or *uterine* relatives are those of his kin who descend by female links from the same ancestress as Ego.

Ego's *cross-line* relatives are those of his kin who are neither patrilineally nor matrilineally related to him.

Ego's *paternal* or *patrilateral* relatives are those of his kin to whom he is connected through his father.

Ego's *maternal* or *matrilateral* relatives are those of his kin to whom he is connected through his mother.

To sum up:

Relatives	{	are <i>kin</i> (or consanguineal relatives or cognates) who can be distinguished as	1. patrilineal (or agnatic)
			2. matrilineal (or uterine)
	{	or as	3. cross-line
			1. paternal (or patrilateral)
{	and <i>affines</i> who can be distinguished as	2. maternal (or matrilateral)	
		1. kin of Ego's spouse	
		2. spouses of Ego's kin.	

² See for instances, Fagls, 1933.

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604 obligation to pay the bride-wealth; she could exert further
 582 pressure on her brothers by not agreeing to the marriage; finally,
 584 she had the power to curse her nephews and nieces. All this accounted for the importance of her role in the inzu. Nieces and nephews very often turned to her and she was often said to love them more than her own children. This difference between FaBr's and FaSi's attitudes toward Ego is perhaps reflected in the terminology. FaBr referred to his nephew by the word *muhunguwacu* (our-boy) and to his niece by *mukobwawacu* (our-girl), whereas the FaSi referred to both of them by *musengenezwanyu* (my niece/nephew). This last word contains the possessive 'my' used in kinship terminology usually for only the primary relatives, whereas the term of reference used by the FaBr includes the form 'our' usually used for secondary or more distant relatives.

- 602 Between Ego and the members of the generations alternate to his own, there were symmetrical relations of great familiarity and joking, with a preponderant sexual theme. The grandfather
- 603 called his granddaughters his little wives and his grandsons his love rivals. The reason given for this familiarity is that it helped to
- 867 cheer up the old people and to train the young ones in socially enjoyable talk. Grandfathers also participated in the socialization
- 887 of the grandchildren by transmitting proverbs, legends, tales of
- 869 past history, and mythological conceptions in which a great deal of the Ruanda view of the world was embodied.

593 As regards siblings, Ego was expected to have a respectful attitude towards his eldest brother, *uwamboneye izuba* (the first who saw the sun) even if the latter happened not to inherit the paternal authority over his brothers. In these cases he was honoured more than his brother who wielded the paternal authority. The eldest brother's advice was always asked by his siblings. Other brothers were expected to assume what we would call fraternal attitudes. But as brothers competed for their father's favour and had to share his heritage, there was under this appearance of cordiality a very deep rivalry and mutual distrust. It should be noted that all that is said of siblings applied both to half paternal siblings and to full siblings. In a descent group founded on agnatic principles the distinction of full and half paternal siblings is largely irrelevant.

Sisters were also expected to respect and obey their oldest brother. After they had reached puberty, however, he could not enforce obedience. The oldest sister's role was somewhat similar

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activities of her husband's inzu and was not bound by all the obligations common to the members of her own inzu, a few words should be added about her behaviour in this connexion.

She participated in the cult of Ego's (= her husband's) ancestor and of her own ancestor, but she was not allowed to build a shrine in honour of her ancestor in Ego's enclosure. She gave the ritual gifts at the birth of a child in her own inzu as well as in Ego's inzu, and did the same at marriage ceremonies. In times of mourning, Ego's inzu was predominant: his wife had to practise sexual abstinence for two or three months when Ego's parents died. For her own parents she was not bound by any such observances. She received protection from her husband's group, but from her own only when she had disputes with Ego's lineage

2. THE DESCENT GROUP OF EGO'S MOTHER

A man (or a woman) was not a member of his mother's patrilineage, which is why in the preceding section only his agnates were considered. But the picture of Ego's position in kinship relations would be incomplete if it were limited to that. Ego's mother's agnates were not complete strangers to him. In everyday life, he met them often and his culture provided him with roles to assume in these circumstances. In some cases Ego's behaviour to 'maternal' kin was very similar to that which he was expected to observe towards the agnatic counterpart of that kin.

Role	Term of address	Term of reference
<i>I. The generation of Ego's mother</i>		
Mo	Mama	Mama
MoBr	Data	Marume
MoSi	Mama	Mamawacu
MoFaBrSo	Data	Marume
MoFaBrDa	Mama	Mamawacu
MoFaFaBrSoSo	Data	Marume
MoFaFaBrSoDa	Mama	Mamawacu
<i>II. The generation of Ego's maternal grandfather</i>		
MoFa	Sogokuru	Sogokuru
MoFaBr	Sogokuru	Sogokuru
MoFaSi	Nyogokuru	Nyogokuru
<i>III. The generation of Ego's maternal great-grandfather</i>		
MoFaFa	Sogokuru	Sogokuruza
MoFaFaBr	Sogokuru	Sogokuruza
MoFaFaSi	Nyogokuru	Nyogokuruza

*I. The generation of Ego's mother**II. The generation of Ego's maternal grandfather**III. The generation of Ego's maternal great-grandfather*

3. EGO'S CROSS-LINE RELATIVES

602 The cross-line relatives of Ego are people who are socially recognized as related to him although they do not belong either to his parents' descent groups or to the category of his relatives by affinity.

[605] In Ruanda, the category of cross-line relatives was limited to
[609] Ego's paternal cross-cousins, his maternal parallel cousins, their descendants, his sororal nephews and nieces, and their descendants.

Paternal cross-cousins did not belong to Ego's father's patrilineage since they were members of their own father's (FaSiHu of Ego) lineage. It could be said that they were agnates of FaSiHu who was himself an affine of Ego. It seems, however, that the link between Ego and his paternal cross-cousins was their mother (FaSi) and not their father (FaSiHu). This is why I do not include Ego's paternal cross-cousins among Ego's affines.

Maternal cross-cousins were not Ego's cross-line relatives because they were related to Ego as agnates of Ego's mother. On the contrary maternal parallel cousins of Ego were cross-line relatives of Ego's mother: her sororal nephews and nieces. Ego was not related to them through his MoSiHu but through his MoSi as the term of reference used by Ego indicates: child-of-my-maternal-aunt (*mwenemamawacu*). This is why I regard them as Ego's cross-line relatives.

604 Ego was related to his sororal nephews and nieces through his sister in spite of the fact that her children belonged to her husband's agnatic group.

601 Role	Term of address	Term of reference
FaSiSo	Name, nickname or Muvandimwe	Mubyarawanjye
FaSiDa	Muvandimwe	Mubyarawanjye
MoSiSo	Muvandimwe	Mwenemamawacu
MoSiDa	Muvandimwe	Mwenemamawacu
SiSo	Mwana	Mwishyawanjye
SiDa	Mwana	Mwishyawanjye

605 Familiarity, jesting, erotic games without actual intercourse before marriage, were the relations of paternal cross-cousins (as well as maternal cross-cousins) of the opposite sex. The difference was that paternal cross-cousins had to assist each other and often fought together in blood-feuds although, as they did not belong [613] to the same *insu*, they could not be killed in retaliation.

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604 was expected to be protective, but he had no authority over his sister's children unless bride-wealth had not been paid for her.

4. EGO'S AFFINES

128 Following *Notes and Queries*, I shall distinguish two classes among the relatives by marriage. First, those in which the affinal link is the first traced from Ego, i.e. kin of the spouse; secondly, those in which the kinship link is the first one traced, i.e. persons who have married kinsmen and kinswomen.¹⁸

602 I shall begin with the second class: spouses of members of Ego's patrilineage, of Ego's mother's patrilineage and their own agnatic relatives. Not all of these spouses were considered by Ruanda to be significantly related to Ego. They say, for instance, that the wife of the maternal uncle (MoBrWi) is just a stranger, whereas there was a particular code of behaviour laid down towards the wife of the paternal uncle (FaBrWi). Among affines I include, besides these spouses of Ego's consanguineal relatives, the consanguineal relatives of these spouses, such as DaHuFa, SoWiFa, &c.

601 (a) *The Spouses of Ego's Kin*

This is the nomenclature of the second class of Ego's affines.

Role	Term of address	Term of reference
<i>I. The generation of Ego's father</i>		
FaWi	Mama	Mukadata (wife of Fa)
FaBrWi	Mama	Mukadatawacu (wife of FaBr)
FaSiHu	Name	Mugabo wa masenge (husband of FaSi)
MoSiHu	Name	Mugabo wa mamawacu (husband of MoSi)
<i>II. The generation of Ego's grandfather</i>		
FaFaWi	Nyogokuru	Nyogokuru
MoFaWi	Nyogokuru	Nyogokuru
<i>III. Ego's generation</i>		
BrWi (m.s.)	Name, nickname or Muvandimwe	Mugore wacu (wife-our)
BrWi (f.s.)	Name, nickname or Muvandimwe	Muramukazi wanjye
SiHu (f.s.)	Name, nickname or Muvandimwe	Mugabowacu (husband-our)
SiHu (m.s.)	Name, nickname or Muvandimwe	Muramu wanjye

¹⁸ Royal Anthropological Institute, 1931, p. 87.

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604 The paternal uncle's wife (FaBrWi) was more deeply connected with Ego's inzu. She bore children who were Ego's parallel cousins; there was no incest taboo between her and Ego's father and if her husband died, she might become a wife of Ego's father. For all these reasons, respectful and almost filial behaviour towards her was expected from Ego.

835 For the affinal relatives of Ego's generation, the rule was quite simple. There was no incest taboo; there was on the contrary a privileged sexual partnership (as described earlier in connexion with the paternal cross-cousins) between a male Ego on the one hand and on the other the wives of his brothers, parallel cousins, and cross-cousins. And the same *mutatis mutandis* when Ego is female.

606 Between Ego and his daughter-in-law (SoWi) there was no incest prohibition, although there was between a female Ego and her son-in-law (her DaHu). This was rationalized by saying that the SoWi is for Ego a little spouse and not a daughter, whereas for the son-in-law, his wife's mother is his mother. As may be imagined the role of SoWi, 'daughter' and rival of her HuMo, was not an easy one as regards Ego and Ego's wife. Her ambivalent situation was reflected in her traditionally expected behaviour. She had to behave respectfully, obediently, and affectionately, as a daughter, towards her parents-in-law, and at the same time she was expected to assume almost an avoidance attitude: she was not allowed to pronounce their names nor even words which sounded similar.

Ego's daughter's husband was expected to conform to the same verbal taboos as regards his father-in-law (Ego) and his mother-in-law (Ego's wife). He was not allowed to eat at his parents-in-law's until his wife had had a child. Even then he never spoke if not invited to. After a certain period of time, however, when the marriage was stable and had produced a few children, relations eventually became freer, though they remained always rather reserved.

601 All other affines of generations following that of Ego were designated by the same term, even if they were not connected through his patrilineal descendents, DaDaHu for instance.

(b) *The kin of Ego's wife*

602 Let us now consider the other class of affines, that in which the affinal link is first traced from Ego. These are the consanguineal

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relatives of Ego's spouse among whom we have included the patrilineal kin of the spouse's mother. More exactly, in this total class of potential affines, the Ruanda chose a few of them who they considered as relatives of Ego because for one reason or another they had a certain role to play in his social or cultural life. The others had been neglected. It has been necessary in this case to distinguish between a male and a female Ego.

Role	Term of address	Term of reference
<i>I. The first generation above Ego: Male speaking</i>		
WiFa	Sogokuru	Databukwe (father through marriage)
WiMo	Nyogokuru	Mabukwe
WiFaBr	Sogokuru	Databukwe
WiFaSi	Nyogokuru	Mabukwe
WiMoBr	Sogokuru	Databukwe
WiFaFaBrSoSo &c.	Sogokuru	Databukwe

Female speaking

HuFa	Sogokuru	Databukwe
HuMo	Nyogokuru	Mabukwe
HuFaBr	Sogokuru	Databukwe
HuFaSi	Nyogokuru	Mabukwe
HuMoBr	Sogokuru	Databukwe
HuFaFaBrSoSo	Sogokuru	Databukwe

II. The second generation above Ego: Male speaking

WiFaFa	Sogokuru	Sogokuru
WiFaFaBr	Sogokuru	Sogokuru
WiFaMo	Nyogokuru	Nyogokuru
WiMoFa	Sogokuru	Sogokuru
&c.		

Female speaking

HuFaFa	Sogokuru	Sogokuru
HuFaFaBr	Sogokuru	Sogokuru
HuMoFa	Sogokuru	Sogokuru
HuFaMo	Nyogokuru	Nyogokuru
&c.		

III. Ego's generation: Male speaking

WiSi	Name	Muramukaziwanjye
WiFaBrDa	Name	Muramukaziwanjye
WiMoSiDa	Name	Muramukaziwanjye
WiSiHu	Name	Musanziirewanjye
WiFaBrDaHu	Name	Musanziirewacu
WiMoSiDaHu	Name	Musanziirewacu
WiBr	Name	Muramuwanjye
WiBrWi	Name	Muramuwanjye

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partnership among cross-cousins and that this was only one aspect of wider behaviour patterns of familiarity and joking. The relations between Ego and certain of his affines should be understood in the same sense. 607
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These relations were reciprocal in the sense that the husband of Ego's partner was also the privileged partner of Ego's wife, as the two husbands had the same relationships of affinity with each other's wives. This reciprocity seemed essential to the working of the system, which otherwise would have been probably too frustrating. The case of the wife of Ego's wife's brother (WiBrWi) confirms this interpretation. Although she was quite unrelated to Ego, there was a kind of 'incest' taboo concerning any relation with her. There was a strict avoidance (Ego was not allowed to stay alone with his WiBrWi) and such a relation was considered to bring ill-luck not only to the partners but to the lineages concerned. The reason for that prohibition, I was told, was that the husband of WiBrWi, being the brother of Ego's wife, was prevented by the incest-taboo from having any reciprocal relations with her. It appears, however, that the common resentment of Ego and his WiBrWi against their common in-laws may have been such that these sanctions were not a sufficient deterrent.

These different patterns of behaviour were expressed in terminology. Ego referred by the same term to his wife's female parallel cousins and by another to her cross-cousins and male parallel cousins. There was also a special term to designate those who are husbands of privileged partners. A female Ego used terms in which similar distinctions appeared. 601

5. SOME COMMENTS ON KINSHIP PRINCIPLES IN RUANDA

(a) *Analytical table of kinship terms*

The attention I have given and have still to give to kinship terminology rests on the assumption that the use of kinship terms indicates what aspects, among the many that could be stressed in a kinship system, have been actually emphasized in a particular society. Terminology indicates first the principles according to which, among the almost unlimited mass of possible relationships some have been given a name and are thus considered as social roles. Secondly, terminology shows the lines of cleavage according to which the totality of relationships have been separated in different classes. 121
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The last column of the table indicates the range of application of the term: is it classificatory or denotative? Although the nine preceding characteristics are criteria of the range of application, I have considered as denotative not only the terms which have these nine characteristics, but those which show only characteristics 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, i.e. generation, sex, distinction between affinity and consanguinity, lineality and collaterality, bifurcation by sex of connecting relative. 128 601

If we sum up the different symbols in the vertical lines, we obtain for the sixty-one terms of the table (fifty-five terms of reference and six of address) the following results: 601

1. Linguistic structure: 6 elementary terms, 48 derivative, 7 descriptive.
2. 54 denote generation, 7 do not.
3. 43 denote sex of the relative, 18 do not.
4. 54 do not cover both affinal and consanguineal relative together and 7 do.
5. 45 do not denote a class of people including lineal and collateral relatives, 16 do.
6. 34 indicate the sex of the person through whom kinship is traced, 19 do not and in 8 cases the question does not arise as there is no link.
7. 50 terms indicate polarity, 11 do not.
8. 59 do not denote age within generation, 2 do, and in 7 cases they ignore age differences by definition.
9. The speaker's sex is indicated in 16 cases, it is not in 45.
10. There is no case in which it is indicated whether the link is living or dead. Thus, except for the 8 cases in which there is no connecting relative, 53 terms ignore that characteristic.
11. 41 terms are classificatory and 20 are denotative.

(b) Concluding remarks

Let me conclude this chapter with a few remarks on the Ruanda system of kinship and affinity. They are suggested by the previous description of kinship roles or by the table. 602 601

Descent is reckoned patrilineally and a lineage is a corporate group of agnates. But Ego does not feel that all others are strangers. He lives, as it were, in a cognatic as well as an agnatic world. For help in important questions, when it is necessary for him to assert his rights to be assisted, he turns to his patrilineal kinsmen, but in [611] [613]

602 everyday life, when he needs only some slight service, some
601 advice and sympathy, he asks for and receives it from his maternal relatives as easily as from his paternal ones. Moreover, in matters very important to him concerning playmates, sex partners, and marriageable girls, the two groups stand equal: taboo and tolerance apply to maternal as well as to agnatic cousins. Kinship terms, even terms of reference, used to denote the grandparents are the same in both lines.

If the descent groups tend, in many respects, to merge in a kind of cognatic structure, the distinction between affinity and consanguinity is more clearly maintained. Affines are often identified with their spouses who are Ego's kin, and in a situation subordinate to the latter's from the point of view of Ego (as for instance FaSiHu and MoSiHu), or they are considered only in connexion with privileged sexual access. The distinction between affinal and consanguineal relations is emphasized in terminology as only seven terms out of sixty-one denote both affinity and consanguinity relationships. Among the seven, there are five terms of address.

Generation is another focal point of attention in Ruanda kinship relationships. There are broad behaviour patterns expected from people in their relationships simply because they belong to the same or to different generations. Respect should be shown to the members of the generation immediately above, domination and protection are correct behaviour towards people of the generation immediately under Ego, a certain equality tends to prevail between people belonging to the same generation, and there is a great familiarity among those who belong to alternate generations. This is again clearly supported by kinship terminology: fifty-four terms apply only to people of the same generation, whereas only seven fail to denote the generation of the relative. On the other hand, very little attention is paid to age differences within one generation: two terms only denote them, whereas fifty-two do not (in the seven cases left the question does not arise).

In spite of the principle of assimilation of parallel cousins to siblings the distinction in terminology between lineal and collateral relatives is observed more often than would be expected. In forty-five terms, there is no merging and out of the sixteen cases of merging, it should be mentioned that there are six terms of address in which the failure to distinguish is less

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significant because terms of address are more likely to be classificatory.

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Another important principle of cleavage among relatives is sex. Very rarely, as the preceding brief survey of the different kinship roles shows, is kinship behaviour the same towards relatives of both sexes. Out of our list of sixty-one terms, forty-three denote the sex of the relative. Further analysis indicates that what is important is sex in connexion with privileged relations. Terminologically, male parallel cousins of Ego's wife are lumped together with her cross-cousins, whereas her female parallel cousins are designated by another word. This is a case in which the principle of sexual privileged partnership has been more operative than other principles such as descent, &c. The eighteen terms ignoring sex denote relatives with whom Ego could not have sexual relations, either because they would be incestuous or because the difference of age would be too great. It could be argued that sex is not such an important principle in kinship as there are only sixteen terms which denote the speaker's sex and forty-five which do not. I do not think that this objection is a valid one, however, because when terms are not written by an anthropologist but are spoken—as they are meant to be when they are used in everyday life—it is clear to anybody whether the speaker is a man or a woman.

To sum up, the Ruanda kinship system seems to have evolved according to principles stressing the importance of generation and the predominance of an almost cognatic system over affinity, keeping a very clear distinction between lineal and collateral relatives and emphasizing sex especially when connected with privileged sexual access.

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that no other authority had the final say in such appointments. 661

The danger of having some chiefs becoming more and more independent of the central government was avoided by the mwami's power to dismiss anybody and also by the curious duality of chiefs in each district. Increasing the control of the central government over its subordinates seems to have been the function of that duality. Tensions arose between these two chiefs who were neighbours and who exerted their prerogatives in the same territory yet were independent of each other. The mwami was always kept well informed by each of these chiefs of the exactions or suspicious activities of the other. Moreover, both chiefs had the same subordinate, the hill-chief. Consequently the mwami could be sure that if by chance the two chiefs were in agreement, it was very likely that if their common subordinate had some difficulty with one of his superiors, he would attempt and often succeed in getting the other on to his side: *duobus litigantibus tertius gaudens*. In addition, as conflicts of power were unavoidable in such a situation, the chief had to resort to the mwami as judge. In that way the links of the dependence of both of them on the mwami were tightened. 634 649 622

In this analysis it is not suggested that the duality of chiefs was conceived and put into being by a certain mwami in order to fulfil what we regard here as its function. It is possible that it happened in that way. But even if nobody ever thought of reinforcing the royal power by this dual organization, it was nevertheless its function in Ruanda society.

(c) *Social cohesion*

I have mentioned that the hill-chief required dues and tributes not from the individual taxpayer but from the lineage head when possible, and the latter demanded it from the family head. This way of reaching the individual through his kin group and family group enhanced the importance of the descent principle of kin solidarity. Even in Ruanda where the political organization had taken over so many functions from descent groups, the individual as such was not yet recognized in very important matters like the contributions to the maintenance of the rulers. In this interpretation, the kinship and the administrative structures promote the social cohesion of the group as a whole. 651 602 571

To provide the central government with regular revenues, to 000

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well as Tutsi. They did not feel that they were out-group people.

A fourth factor which counterbalanced the socially disintegrative influence of the caste system was the plurality of the structures in which any Ruanda was affiliated.

Through several structures, subjects were much more efficiently bound among themselves and to their rulers than in a unique hierarchy. In the latter case, indeed, if the individual can extricate himself from that hierarchy, he becomes absolutely unattached. In Ruanda, even if one link was broken, the subject did not escape from his superior chiefs. Indeed, he was linked to them, particularly to the mwami, by more than one tie. Almost any Ruanda was dependent on the king through two hierarchical channels: *via* his hill-chief (who himself was subordinated to the cattle- and land-chief) and *via* his army-chief. In addition, the feudal system integrated him into a set of personal loyalty relations such that the person occupying the superior position in one of these relations is himself an inferior in another relation.

It should be mentioned also that any Ruanda was a member of three kin groups: primary and secondary patrilineages and clan. Of course kinship affiliations as such did not cut across caste lines (except for the clan name), but as many of these kinship groups had been for so long established in Ruanda territory, they were certainly a supplementary link between the individual and his country.

The network of relations woven by the political and clientage systems was particularly important in a country where there were no clear-cut groupings based on co-residence. This has led some observers to believe that Ruanda were living in a kind of social vacuum. On the contrary, a Ruanda was never isolated: his social links connected him with the authorities and were ramified, if not in the whole territory, at least in a large area of it.

The last factor of social cohesion to be mentioned here was the ideology developed around the monarchic institution. The mwami was regarded as the king of all Ruanda and not only of the Tutsi. His divine origin keeping him separate from men, bestowed on him an authority which no commoner thought to question. He was closely connected with Imana, conceived as a supreme god rather remote but benevolent. The mwami, representative of Imana, was the father and protector of all Ruanda. Was it not enough to assume towards him a filial attitude and to feel one's